

When Both Masks Fell

BY
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HOW I came to be sailing for Europe with the parson ain't got anything to do with the story. Perhaps you wouldn't have picked me out first guess as the running mate for a D.D. There I was, just the same, and, as we always had before, we got along bully. Not like twins; but twins, I judge, would be poor traveling companions on a long trip. I'd just settled down after shaking day-day to the last of the friends that seen us off, and had located myself on the tip of my spine and the top of my shoulders, which is the most comfortable position to read in. I was just going to begin an article on "The Graft Among Janitors" when I seen she had sat down close by.

I ain't led up very graceful to the lady, but I'll try to put you next to who she was, so far as I knew at the time. She had the kind of face you'd pick out in

move number two was, not having been there when it happened, but the next morning when I came out on deck, there was the parson and her walking up and down real sociable, with plenty to say on both sides.

An elderly party, who appeared to be a sort of umpire to see the young lady got fair play, wasn't in the way at all. She seemed to have a partiality for a chair and a novel, which she read careful, as if she was learning it by heart. The young lady done some reading, too, but not like the elderly party, who dived in early in the morning and only come up to feed. I smoked a good deal and when the parson and her was together I generally was sort of in the suburbs. And I liked to hear 'em talk. Not that I was on to all the curves, but I ain't one of them who thinks because you don't understand everything that's said it ain't worth hearing. The night aboard ship had made her feel better about being away from land.

says, because anyone, elderly party included, had seen him say a number of things, "nothing about my work. Why, he doesn't even know who I am. I only mean it's so delightful just sailing and sailing"—by which she meant steaming and steaming—"that I'd just like to keep on doing it and never see the inside of a theater again," she says.

"You ain't," says the elderly party, "going to fall in love with that man, are you? My dear, how many times have I warned you against marrying outside the profession, if you have to marry at all, which hurts your art awful," she says.

"Love! good gracious! I'm not going to fall in love with anybody," says Suzanne, and by the way she laughed I believed her, and I guess the elderly party did, too, 'cause she settled back in her chair with a satisfied kind of grunt. Then they talked lower, and I didn't hear anything but a word here and there.

"But that name 'Suzanne' set me thinking. I knew I'd seen it before.

Then all of a sudden I remembered and I went below and hunted up the magazine I'd been reading when we began the trip.

I found it all right. It told about her successful season in New York, and how she was going to London to give a new show.

So she was here! I was going to tell the parson right off, and then I thought it over a bit and decided I wouldn't.

"I guess I'll lay low and let him get wise himself," I thought.

But the parson stuck to his notion about not nosing into other people's affairs. For all that, I didn't have to look hard to see that thoughts of the young lady occupied a good many of the minutes he was awake.

"When I get back home," says the young lady, leaning back in her chair and laughing soft and lazy-like, "I'm going to let my eight-day clock run down."

"What for?" says the parson.

"I never realized before," she answers, "what a delightful feeling an eight-day clock must have on the ninth day, when you have forgotten to wind it. Don't you feel that way?"

The parson laughed a little.

"Of course," she goes on, "you wouldn't want to stay run down and be just old junk. There wouldn't be any fun if you didn't know you'd have to be wound up again."

"Just as," says the parson, "you enjoy the five minutes after you know you ought to get up in the morning. I remember when I was a boy I used to plan to take an extra nap Saturday morning—"

"And always woke up an hour earlier," the young lady finishes for him. "And don't you have the same experience Sundays now?" she goes on.

"Well," says the parson, sort of slow, "I don't think I do have that experience on Sunday."

"No?" she says. "Then you should cultivate the feeling, just to keep in touch with your boyhood, you know. You don't grow old so fast and it helps in—in various ways."

"When I was a boy at school I used to funk my algebra pretty regularly," says the parson, "and every once and so often now, I dream that I have neglected it all the year and wake up in a cold perspiration for fear I shall not pass my examination. Won't that do for often keeping me in pretty close touch?"

"You have that dream when you realize that you've been neglecting some unpleasant details of your present job," she laughs.

"Doubtless you're right," he says, sobering down some. "There are many unpleasant details, and it is easy to devote one's time to the congenial duties to the exclusion of those that are distasteful."

Them was his words, and they sounded as if he was saying them from the pulpit.

"You mustn't think I'm trying to lecture you," she comes back at him. "At least your duties are on the shelf for the next few days. There's no wireless equipment aboard and you can let your business go to smash with the comfortable feeling that you can't do anything to prevent it. With me it's different. I ought to be working hard at the present moment," and she glances over in the direction of the elderly party, who was reading as steady as a cyclometer.

The parson looked at the young lady thoughtful like and I could see he'd taken off the "Settlement Worker" tag he'd put on her and hadn't found another tag handy.

"Yes," he says at last, "I'm taking the voyage just for a rest and in order that distance may lend enchantment to a number of people to whom it is sometimes difficult to be as cordial as they expect—as they have a right to expect."

"It's hard to make a hit with a crowd like that," she says. "You feel they're disagreeable and cold and that shrivels you up and then you might as well quit."

"But," says the parson, "although, when human beings are the raw material of one's trade, the worker must have a degree of tact and patience not required by the man who adds a column of figures—the pleasure of the work makes up for the grating nerves."

"Oh, yes," she says, "and most of them are nice. The trouble is, one glum face stands out so prominent, and if you set out to change that one face—as I usually do—and it gets glummer and glummer, somehow you feel that every one else thinks he isn't getting a square deal," she said, and off she went.

It was on the fourth night of the trip that we had the shipwreck. We'd got through doing the usual stunt of walk the deck and some of us had been abed an hour or so. I'd dropped dead asleep as soon as I'd crawled in. The last I remembered was getting in and the next I knew I was out again, and feeling for the doorknob.

I didn't go through any preliminary wondering what was the matter. I knew that it was some sort of a shipwreck. I didn't even wonder if 'twas a collision or a fire or a boiler let go. I knew 'twas a wreck—any old kind of a wreck would do. I didn't feel curious as to the exact kind. I didn't even try to guess what time it was or how long I'd been asleep.

I got the doorknob pretty quick, having been accustomed to get my bearings in the dark, specially as to the location of doors that might be needed in a hurry. When I got out on deck there was a good many there ahead of me and other counties was being heard from all the time, and most of them, too, had been asleep, it taking no Sherlock Holmes to deduce that fact. I never did understand the good of fixing yourself up

fancy when there wasn't anybody else to see. But tastes ain't all the same. They was rushing this way and that in the most useless and foolish sort of way, some of the ladies letting out a screech whenever they thought of it.

One of the men passengers, a fellow in blue silk pajamas, located a boat and made a dive for it, almost knocking over a woman in his hurry. That particular boat didn't have anybody guarding it, and the guy would actually have climbed in and done, I don't know what, if I hadn't uppercut him—gentle, of course, but sufficient for the purpose.

Then I seen the parson. Scared? Scared stiff, you bet! I never got such a jolt in my life as when I seen his staring eyes. Part, and a mighty big part, of my liking for the parson was because he had grit, real nifty grit, the kind that would make a slender young feller stand up to a big, husky cuss who depended on his muscle and a quick eye to make a living, and take that feller by the back of the neck—even if he was leaning over at the time and not wise to the parson being there—and stretch him flat on his back. But, as I say, when I seen them eyes, it made me feel all sort of gone in my stomach.

All of a sudden his eyes changed and his mouth sort of laughed or said "Thank God" or did something that a mouth will all by itself when you're thinking hard and quick about something else, and he made a jump. Then I seen, and I laughed a little, too, all to myself, because I understood.

The parson was standing by her. He wasn't scared any more. He hadn't been scared about himself at all, and he wasn't scared about her now that he was where he could take care of her. And she? She was looking as comfortable as could be expected, as the doctors say, which, after all, isn't very definite and it's not always wise to ask what ought to be expected. Well, she was looking that way, anyhow, and 'twas a good sight comfortabler than most of the other women, barring the elderly party, who didn't look as if she'd turned in before the fire broke out (which is figuratively speaking, there being no fire) and was still holding her play-book. I thought, and I still think, though I wouldn't swear to it, that she opened it once as if to make sure of a line.

For a wreck there was about as little doing as there

reading her book and I was walking up and down, smoking.

"I think," says she as I went by, "that I ought to tell you something."

I suppose he told her to go ahead, but I'd got by and didn't hear him. On the return trip past 'em neither was saying anything, but the parson was looking surprised and kind of hurt, I thought, and she was gazing harder than ever off over the ocean.

On the trip back I got in hearing distance after the parson had begun talking and all I heard was, "I am not bound by custom or convention." I had a good mind to stop and back him up in that, but I went on.

Coming back, I heard the parson say, surprised like, "But how did you know who I am?" That flabbergasted me, too. I didn't suppose she knew who he was any more than the parson had known it. Without thinking what I done, I cut my up trip right off where I was and started back, real slow.

She laughed a little. "When you wrapped that coat about me the other night—the 'other night' and this the next morning!—I forgot to give it back and wore it when I returned to my stateroom."

I had to walk on a little if I wasn't going to butt in, but I tacked again as soon as safe and come back.

"The card," she went right on from what I hadn't heard, "was that of Dr. Joseph Ames Gray, and of course there is but one Dr. Joseph Ames Gray. So I thought," she says sort of slow, and not glib-like.

Just what she thought I didn't hear, though I was walking awful slow now. Before I'd made the turn the elderly party had butted in and the game was called. But I knew that rain checks had been distributed. That conversation hadn't got to the stopping-place.

For the last day of the voyage she and him didn't seem to meet except when the elderly party was in their midst. The little groove between the parson's eyes that was there the night I first met him and that I'd seen on other occasions since, was there all the time and the looks he give the elderly party wasn't pastoral. It wasn't a nice ending of what had been a mighty pleasant voyage. I watched her as well as him, and though she didn't have any groove between her bright eyes, and though to any one not noticing particular she might have seemed as chipper as ever, I didn't think she was real happy either.

I tried to reason it out with myself. "Course it's best it should end this way," I says to myself. "She's a nice little girl, but ain't she an actress?" I says. "A parson and an actress ain't cut out to get married. It's like the old lady says," I says, "it don't pay to marry out of the profession. She'd want to be getting back to the footlights," I says, "even if she thought a heap of him. And does she think so much of him?" I goes on to myself, "ain't she an actress,



THERE WAS ALMOST A HEAD-ON COLLISION.

a crowd and study. She wasn't what you'd call an out-and-out beauty, but she had black hair, and a big lot of it, and black eyes that looked, because of the black eyebrows sort of sliding up, or down, as if she was frowning. But her mouth and the eyes themselves showed she wasn't. They was big eyes and all sorts of things was going on in back of them; you could see that.

I don't think the parson had noticed her at all, he was so busy saying goodbye to the ladies who had come to see him off. She had her goodbyes, too, and one of 'em give her a bunch of big red roses tied with a whopping big ribbon. She had the roses on her arm as she sat there in the steamer chair looking back at little old New York. She was looking hard, and blinking her pretty eyes, as if she could see her crowd back on the pier, which she couldn't.

Then she sort of started, as if she was thinking there wasn't any game in looking backward all the voyage, and the start jerked the roses out of her arm on to the deck. She tried to pick 'em up and the parson done the same, and there was almost a head-on collision, and he smiled his regulation parson smile.

"Allow me," says he.

"Oh, thank you," she says, shooting a smile in his direction. If she had aimed at me, she'd have scored, her eyes being that kind.

"They are very beautiful," says the parson.

I thought at first he meant her eyes.

"Aren't they?" says she.

Then I knew it was the roses.

"I hope they won't wither till we get across," she says, "they smell so lovely. Somehow they remind me of the subway, they're so cool and damp, and, though the subway's horrid, it's land."

"You're not a sailor, then," says he.

"I'm not afraid, or anything like that, only the ocean makes me feel lost," she says, and then she gazes back toward New York, and neither said any more.

A trip across the ocean is long or short, according to what's doing. For my part I missed the telegraph poles, which on a train you can count when nothing else is left to do. The parson didn't seem to feel that way; no more did the young lady. I don't know what

She looked out at the water without seeming to feel so lost.

"It's good to get away from people and from one's work, after all," she says. "I'm beginning to wish the voyage would be longer. It's so free," she says.

"James," says the parson to me, later, "what do you suppose her work is? Is she a settlement worker?" says he.

"Why don't you ask her?" says I.

"Well, she ain't asked me who I am or what I am. When I got into this business suit before coming aboard this steamer," he says, "I done it to forget myself, who I am, what I am; and let the cobwebs get blown out of a tired ecclesiastical brain," he says, as near as I can remember the words he used. "When my name went down on the passenger list as 'J. A. Gray' I felt that I had shed by clerical personality, and that for the next six days I was just J. A. Gray, and not the Rev. Joseph Ames Gray. I didn't care to be identified with the Rev. Joseph Ames. Perhaps she feels the same way about herself," he says, "and I certainly shall respect her desire."

Not being particularly prying into other people's affairs—at least not since the time when my curiosity into the affairs of the parson's house brought him and me together that night a year ago—I was willing to let things go as the parson wished. But, for all that, I found out who the young lady was, not meaning to, either.

I was sitting on deck that evening and the parson was in his stateroom. The young lady come and sat down by the elderly party who I mentioned already, and not far from me.

"Suzanne," says the elderly party, "I don't wish to criticize, and I know you are an awful quick reader," she says, "but there's only three more days of the trip. I know you wasn't up in your part before we sailed. Do you know it much better now?"

"Oh, I'm tired of parts," says the young lady, putting. (I could hear her put if I couldn't see her.) "I wish I never had to go into a theater again."

I could tell by the rustle that that speech made the elderly party sit up.

"Why, Suzanne," she says, quite scared, "what has that man been saying?"

"He hasn't been saying anything. That is," she



THEM TWO WAS ON DECK, LEANING OVER THE RAIL.

could be. Not that the screeching and the chicken-with-her-head-off chasing around of the passengers didn't make enough excitement, but the boat itself wasn't doing anything except lay still. The night was calm enough, and there wasn't, as I said before, any fire, although half the women smelled smoke. A real, genuine woman can always smell smoke or hear burglars. Finally things calmed down enough for the officers to tell us there wasn't any danger; that something had busted in the machinery and had brought us up short, but we'd be all right in a few hours.

I'm sorry I can't make that shipwreck more exciting. For itself it wasn't worth telling about, and we all seen that and a good many was sorry—so they said—having always wanted to be in a real one. But, although as a wreck it was all to the bad, as part of the lives of the parson and the actress it had considerable importance.

The next day, with the sun shining bright and the boat skipping along, them two was on deck, her leaning on the rail, looking off, and him half leaning on the rail and looking at her. The elderly party was

always playing a part? How will he know when she's acting and when she ain't? How does he know—and how do I know, that she ain't been amusing herself acting all along?"

Then I got mad at myself. I ain't one of them fellers that reads bumps on your head or looks at you and tells you what you're thinking about, but I'd have staked my bottom dollar on the fact that she wasn't doing any play-acting with the parson.

But she steered clear of him right up smack to getting off time. I was pretty busy towards the close, seeing to my things and the parson's, and so I wasn't in for all the preliminary sparring. But I was there for the finish. That was after we'd landed.

He come up as solemn as if he was the officiating clergyman at a funeral. She held out her hand and looked up in his face with a smile so sort of bright and ordinary that it made me mad, and made me begin to think about acting again. Then her cheeks got sort of red—not acting about that—and her eyes dropped, and he bent over and put his arm about her and kissed her.

Next Week, Up To Specifications

By
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